

2020

Made by
refugees.

ANNUAL REPORT

A Word From the Executive Director

2020, the 45th anniversary of the Southeast Asian American community, is a year that we will never forget.

With the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, life as we knew it has been completely changed for the past year and counting -- and possibly forever. Existing disparities in health and economic security were exacerbated for Southeast Asian Americans and other vulnerable groups, resulting in immense loss for our communities. Even as vaccines are rolling out, we are still contending with disinformation, barriers to access, and historic distrust of a discriminatory healthcare system. And xenophobic, racist language used by national leadership has resulted in increased hate crimes against Asian Americans across the country, devastating our physical and mental health.

But the response to this earth-shattering pandemic has been deeply rooted in community and gives us hope for our recovery. We saw the devastating murder of George Floyd in May that launched an international uprising against police brutality, anti-Blackness, and white supremacy, the likes of which have not been seen since the birth of the civil rights movement in the 1950s. In response to COVID-19 and rising levels of anti-Asian violence, our community came together to support one another and identify solutions, like the ways that [Savoenn Phan](#) leveraged social media and technology to keep her community connected. Or how [Tamthy Le](#) organized her neighbors to provide food, supplies, and other mutual aid to those in need. This incredible solidarity within and between communities keeps us safe, fights back against systems of oppression, and provides a powerful vision for a better world.

We know that the road to healing is long. Vaccines are slowly alleviating the worst of the pandemic, but the mental health impacts will be felt for many years to come. Thankfully, the outpouring of support from our communities and our allies, along with nationwide mobilization in support of racial justice, provides a road map for a better future. As the national voice of Southeast Asian Americans, SEARAC will continue to lead the way in advocating for our communities' right to be seen, to heal, and to family. We're proud to present our 2020 annual report as a testament to our community's legacy, history, and progress, and our vision for a better future.

With deep gratitude,

Quyen Dinh



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About SEARAC

OUR MISSION

SEARAC was founded in 1979 as the “Indochina Refugee Action Center” due to concern about the genocide in Cambodia and large number of refugees fleeing Southeast Asia. After the war and bombings of Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia claimed millions of lives between 1955 and 1975, our founders advocated for the passage of the 1980 Refugee Resettlement Act, which created our nation’s first comprehensive and unified system of refugee resettlement and support. **SEARAC’s mission as a national civil rights organization is to empower Cambodian, Laotian, and Vietnamese American communities to create a socially just and equitable society.** As representatives of the largest refugee community ever resettled in the United States, SEARAC stands together with other refugee communities, communities of color, and social justice movements in pursuit of social equity.

OUR COMMUNITIES

For SEARAC, **Southeast Asian American** is a political identity that comes from the shared experience of people who came to this country as refugees from the United States occupation of Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam. Southeast Asian Americans now number nearly three million, and most of them arrived in the US as refugees, are the children of refugees, were sponsored by refugee families, or arrived as immigrants. Southeast Asian Americans include people from dozens of diverse ethnic and language groups, including but not limited to:

- Cham, a Muslim minority group
- Khmer
- Khmer Loeu, or Highland Khmer
- Hmong
- Lu Mien or Mien
- Khmu
- Lao, otherwise referred to as Lao Loum or Lowland Lao
- Taidam
- Khmer Kampuchea Krom, or ethnic Khmer
- Montagnards, or Highlanders of several different ethnic groups
- Vietnamese
- Certain ethnic Chinese also have heritage in Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam.



IN 2020, WE WORKED ON:

COVID-19 Community Education

2020 Census

**2020 Presidential Election
Voter Education**

Aging with Dignity

Boys and Men of Color

Education Equity

Immigrant Justice

Healthcare Access

Mental Health



**THROUGH
THE FOLLOWING
STRATEGIES:**

- 1 BUILDING POWERFUL COMMUNITY LEADERS AND ADVOCATES**
- 2 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND MOBILIZATION**
- 3 NATIONAL AND STATE POLICY ADVOCACY**
- 4 INTERNAL INFRASTRUCTURE BUILDING**

2020 By the Numbers



87,000

people reached with information about census and elections through SEARAC's network



491

attendees of SEARAC's community calls and listening sessions



149

organizational sign-ons to our letter to incoming President Biden on Southeast Asian deportations



5

2020 presidential election voter guides in Hmong, Khmer, Lao, Mien, and Vietnamese



91

organizational sign-ons to our letter to Department of Homeland Security [DHS] Secretary Mayorkas on final DHS enforcement guidance regarding Southeast Asian Americans



39

in-language Get Out the Count materials created for the 2020 Census

Responding to Historic Moments

In 2020, as our communities felt the brunt of COVID-19, SEARAC's strategy needed to evolve. We focused on deepening our strengths and continuing to do what the community has consistently relied on us to do: listening, convening, educating, mobilizing, and advocating. In response to the growing needs of our community, SEARAC launched a [COVID-19 Resource Hub](#) to share resources for and stories from the SEAA community. We also launched a COVID-19 Critical Relief Fund, which supported organizations that were directly assisting community members facing issues like eviction, ineligibility for unemployment, lack of food security, heightened risk of contracting COVID-19, and barriers to health care treatment. As part of this effort, we raised more than \$2,000 through limited-edition "Made By Refugees" and "Made by Immigrants" posters and art prints, exclusively designed by [My Tien Pham](#), graphic designer, artist, and SEARAC Leadership and Advocacy Training alumnus.





“There’s no word for virus, so you have to use ‘bacteria.’ I have to use examples to point out severity. You might hear, ‘Well, it’s a 3% death rate.’ I have to use an example like, ‘If I gave you 100 Skittles and told you three of those Skittles can kill you, would you still eat those 100 Skittles?’”

- Ocean Le, Brooklyn, NY



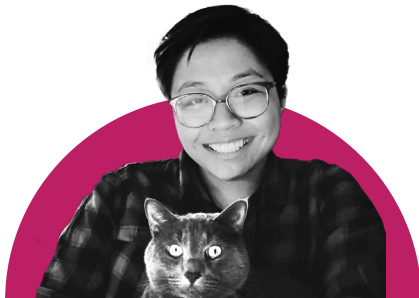
“They’re scared to open up and speak up about what the challenges are because they’re afraid that their name’s going to be put out there. And then in turn, there may be potentially some adverse action that is taken against them, whether or not it’s at the workplace or in the community itself. So it has been a little challenging getting people to open up and speak about how COVID has directly impacted their families, how they’re coping with things at work, things like that.”

- Bana Soumetho, Eden Prairie, MN



“Two inequalities we are experiencing that have been exacerbated in this crisis are the digital divide and the linguistic divide. Many conversations with school staff and organization partners have echoed these challenges. Yes, we do have a health crisis and it has challenges, but within the education and social services, immigrant, refugee, and non-English speaking communities’ issues with digital and language inaccessibility are even more prevalent now.”

- Raksmeymony Yin, Philadelphia, PA



“My first concern was making sure my staff was safe and well informed. As individuals who are the direct communication to the students and families that we served, our staff often act as a ‘Google’ sounding board, friend, or mentor to our community. When staff found out that students/families did not have access to food or income, they were quick to mobilize and provide support.”

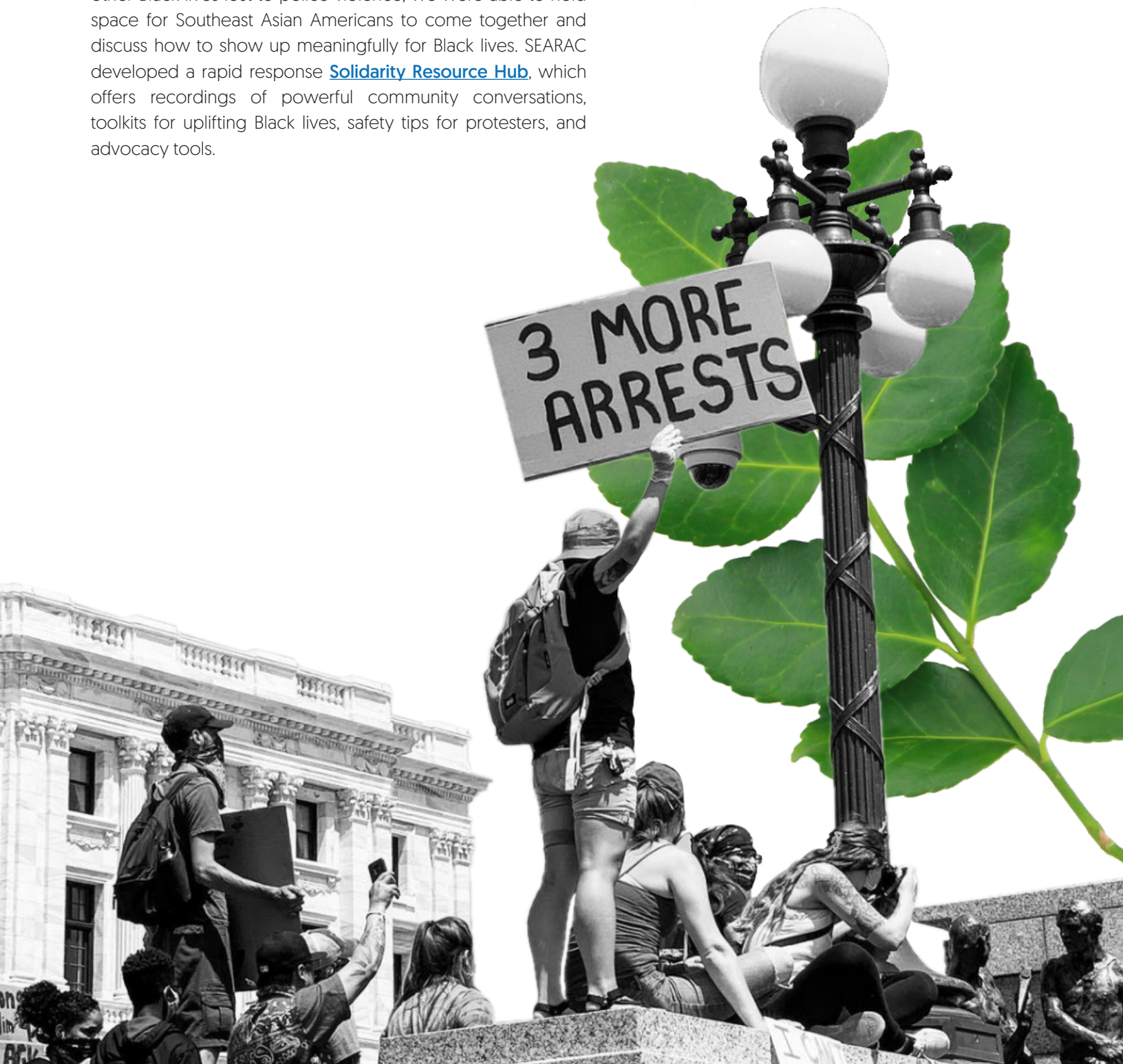
- Tamthy Le, Seattle, WA



“We have been through wars, poverty, famine, natural disasters, and several other types of crises, but yet we still survived. Our continued existence today in many countries around the world shows how incredibly resilient we really are despite all the odds. I am confident that this too shall pass for us, as everything else has.”

- May Saechao, Portland, OR

In May, Southeast Asian American communities were outraged and heartbroken at the murder of George Floyd, and SEAAAs across the country pledged solidarity and support to the Black communities rising up to demand justice. For Breonna Taylor, for Sandra Bland, for Jacob Blake, and for the countless other Black lives lost to police violence, we were able to hold space for Southeast Asian Americans to come together and discuss how to show up meaningfully for Black lives. SEARAC developed a rapid response [Solidarity Resource Hub](#), which offers recordings of powerful community conversations, toolkits for uplifting Black lives, safety tips for protesters, and advocacy tools.



SEAAAs Count — This year and in the years to come

FROM COAST TO COAST, SEARAC RAISED AWARENESS OF 2020'S TWO HIGHLY ANTICIPATED HISTORIC MOMENTS: THE 2020 CENSUS AND THE 2020 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION.

- **Our Census website housed in-language information** on the resources, funding, and political power that the 2020 Census brought to communities.
- **Our 97 Census Ambassadors** signed a pledge to get out the count among their family, friends, and neighbors.
- **Our census partner network** worked tirelessly amidst shifting census deadlines and emerging community needs due to COVID-19.
- **Our 2020 Presidential [Election guides](#)** provided community members with written and audio translations in Hmong, Khmer, Lao, Mien, and Vietnamese to support an engaged and informed voting body.



Power Through Policy

LEGISLATIVE HIGHLIGHTS

[New Way Forward Act](#) (H.R. 536, re-introduced by Rep. Chuy Garcia): the most robust immigration enforcement bill introduced in Congress in the last two decades.

- SEARAC helped write and edit the original bill in the 116th Congress, coordinated reintroduction through our crimmigration coalition in the 117th, and secured new congressional support

[Honor Our Commitment Act](#) (H.R. 7053, introduced by Rep. Alan Lowenthal): the first standalone Vietnamese anti-deportation bill, which would place a moratorium on certain Vietnamese deportations

- SEARAC assisted in crafting bill language

[H.Res. 952](#), introduced by Rep. Alan Lowenthal: formally recognized the atrocities of the United States in Southeast Asian during the Vietnam War, opposed Southeast Asian deportations, and called for a moratorium on their removals

- SEARAC supported the writing of this resolution and helped secure 27 cosponsors

“Access to language means access to justice. We witness our community navigate health, education, and social service institutions without the necessary resources and support to thrive. Governmental agencies have not prioritized our community and failed to build the capacity within our community to support Southeast Asians with limited English proficiency.”

- **CHANDA WOMACK**, Alliance of Rhode Island Southeast Asians for Education (ARISE), excerpt from SEAA Journeys report



POLICY TOOLS

In 2020, SEARAC released a number of groundbreaking reports.

In partnership with Asian Americans Advancing Justice-Los Angeles (AAAJ-LA), we launched [Southeast Asian American Journeys: A National Snapshot of Our Communities](#), which captures key disaggregated data for SEAA refugee communities who fled the trauma of war and violence following the Vietnam War, Khmer Rouge genocide, and bombings in Laos to seek haven in the United States 45 years ago. This comprehensive national report also features statewide profiles, as well as individual refugee and resettlement narratives.

Together with the Institute for Higher Education Policy, Education Policy Manager Anna Byon authored [“Everyone Deserves to be Seen:” Recommendations for Improved Federal Data on Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders](#), which sets forth clear policy recommendations for Congress, federal, state, and local agencies, and institutions of higher education. The actionable recommendations look to the race and ethnicity categories used by the US Census Bureau, which are informed by empirical research, collaboration between statistical agencies across the federal government, and engagement of diverse communities.

Advocacy, Reimagined

SEARAC kicked off 2020 with our Leadership Empowerment Advocacy Fellowship, where we invited community-based partners and advocates doing work around immigration, education, and the 2020 Census to come together and strategize on how to move our collective movement forward.

Later in the year, with stay-at-home orders in effect, SEARAC hosted our first ever Digital Advocacy Training, a weeklong reimagining of our traditional in-person Leadership and Advocacy Training that we hold annually in Washington, DC. Our Digital Advocacy Training workshops expanded access, connecting 225 participants from all over the country, including upwards of 50 participants who had never attended a SEARAC event before. Participants learned about the Southeast Asian American legacy, SEARAC's policy priorities, and practical tips for engaging lawmakers at all levels.

“As a young ally and researching about the Southeast Asian American community beforehand, the layout of the presentation in covering pivotal events and data on SEA people/issues was incredibly informative. I’ll be taking the time to completely read the report that was covered in the presentation so I can understand community trends even more.”

- DAT 2020 PARTICIPANT



2020 Financials

REVENUE	2020	2019	2018
Grants-Foundation/Nonprofits	1,380,508	1,432,698	1,305,597
Grants-Corporate/Business	148,574	247,645	95,559
Individual Contribution	31,658	45,228	24,753
Fundraising Income	-	-	-
Other Income	78,095	9,377	75,994
Total Revenue	1,638,835	1,734,948	1,501,903
EXPENDITURES	2020	2019	2018
Program Expenses	1,366,687	1,545,739	1,251,872
Administrative Expenses	142,667	168,489	125,309
Fundraising Expenses	44,566	47,915	41,018
Total Expenses	1,553,920	1,762,143	1,418,199
NET ASSETS	2020	2019	2018
Net Assets at the Beginning of the Year	1,618,814	1,394,679	781,428
Release from Restriction	-137,056	224,135	613,251
Total Net Assets	1,481,758	1,618,814	1,394,679

2020 Funders

FOUNDATIONS

- Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation
- Fidelity Charitable - Solidarity Giving
- Kresge Foundation
- NEO Philanthropy
- Open Society Foundations
- Sierra Health Foundation - San Joaquin Valley Health Fund
- The California Endowment
- The California Wellness Foundation
- Wallace H. Coulter Foundation

CORPORATIONS

- State Farm

ORGANIZATIONS

- California Pan-Ethnic Health Network
- Croal Services Group
- Diverse Elders Coalition
- Institute for Higher Education Policy
- National Education Association
- The Leadership Conference Education Fund



"I'm inspired to give to SEARAC because as a child of Khmer immigrants I understand how pivotal it is to uplift and support the Southeast Asian community. I'm grateful for the sacrifices my grandmother and mother made for me to be where I am today, and I want to contribute in a way that makes progress possible."

- JENIFER CHAMREUN, Oklahoma



"I'm inspired to give to SEARAC for the work they do to educate and mobilize those in the Southeast Asian diaspora. After attending LAT in 2019, I've never felt so seen before and felt more equipped to make change within my little sphere of influence. For these reason and many more, I'm committed to giving, to push SEARAC's mission forward."

- LILY NHOISAYKHAM, Texas



"I am a SEARAC sustainer because I believe that the work to change policies and systems so that everyone has what they need to live with dignity must be led by people and communities with the lived experience to deeply understand what needs to change. By supporting SEARAC, I know I am helping to strengthen national leadership that brings Southeast Asian voices to policy tables and to amplify the amazing local work happening in Southeast Asian communities around the country."

- HILARY BINDER-AVILES, Washington, DC



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